

Essays on migration and occupational choice

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Summary

Motivated by the growing interest in migration as an economic and social phenomenon, this doctoral thesis explores several aspects of the relationship between migration and occupational choice. It consists of four self-contained essays, studying the effects of migration on occupational choice (Chapters 2-3), on the time allocation of those who stay behind (4) as well as the determinants of migration (5). Together, these *Essays* refine existing thinking on labour, migration and social health protection, by suggesting that, in low- and middle-income countries, migration contributes to a dynamic, lifetime continuum of occupations, and that publicly provided healthcare condition migration, directly or indirectly, through effects on the labour force.

Chapter 2 uses data from Egypt to show that migration influences the formation of a balanced skill profile conducive to entrepreneurship by facilitating the accumulation of skills across sectors and occupations. With data from Kyrgyzstan, findings of Chapter 3 suggest that, while return migration increases the probability to enter into self-employment, returnees' motives to do so are based on necessity rather than opportunity, when market-supporting institutions are lacking. As a result, self-employment tends to be more of a temporary choice, akin to a 'parking lot' – they are more likely to exit from self-employment in subsequent periods than non-migrants, and to move to employed occupations. Turning to those who stay behind, Chapter 4 reveals that the return of migrant household members alters the time allocation of non-migrating household members, spouses, even once migration is complete. Last, Chapter 5 uses a natural experiment in Mexico, the introduction of publicly provided healthcare, to stress that financial and care constraints prevent households from sending migrants. By freeing up working-age household members' time and strengthening household (economic) resilience in the face of health shocks, non-contributory health insurance alleviates financial and time constraints, and increases internal migration.

The findings of this thesis thus contribute to the academic and policy debates by suggesting that (i) migrating can be seen as a process shaping entrepreneurial abilities; (ii) the potential for return migration to stimulate entrepreneurship in origin communities should not be overestimated, as it might not lead to sustaining a career in self-employment in the absence of market-supporting institutions; (iii) the necessity to account for (possibly) time depriving effects on women induced by their husbands temporarily migrating, even once migration is complete; and that (iv) social health protection can have multiplier effects on economic development through migration by enabling labour force detachment of working-age members in affiliated households.